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LIVE
JOYFULLY.

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LIVE JOYFULLY;

OR, THE

DUTY AND MEANS OF BEING HAPPY.

BY THE

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AUTHOR OF

"INTERESTING NARRATIVES FROM THE SACRED VOLUME, ILLUSTRATED,"

ETC. ETC.



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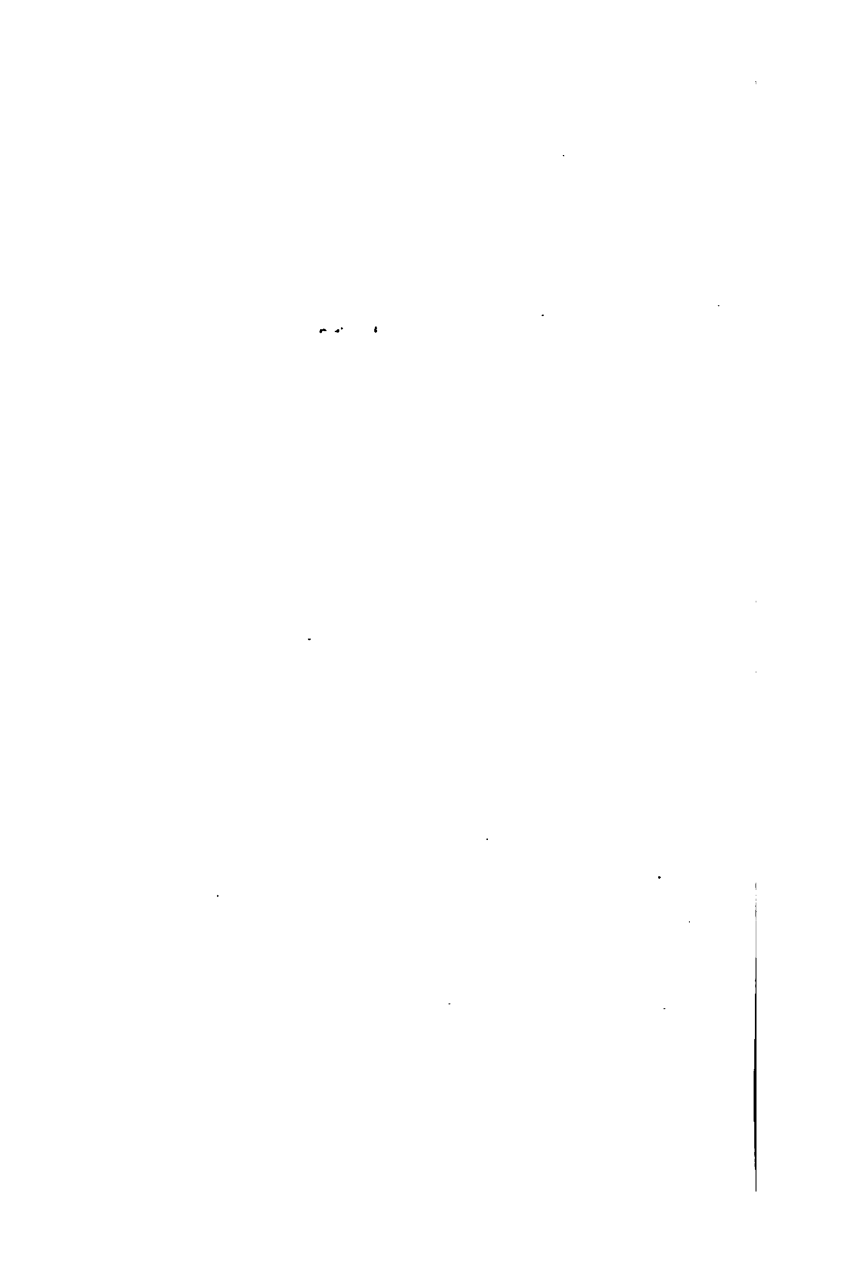
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LIVE JOYFULLY!

CHAP. I.

MAN CAPABLE OF HAPPINESS — PURSUES IT IN
IMPROPER PATHS.

What nothing earthly gives, or can destroy—
The soul's calm sunshine, and the heartfelt joy.

“LIVE JOYFULLY!”—Such was the counsel given by Solomon, the wisest of mere mortals; and we are neither disposed to explain away the injunction, to affix to it a qualified sense, to *spiritualize* it, as a certain censurable practice has sometimes been called, nor in any other way to lessen the force of it, considered as the high command of Heaven. It is true that some persons, who have entirely misunderstood the nature of true religion, have represented it as unfavourable to enjoyment, and as cherishing a spirit of moroseness and

melancholy. If it be so, defend religion, and extend it who may, we will not. Could the statement be proved, that it takes from man one source of real happiness, or that it exposes him to one real evil, we would renounce it for ourselves, and do what we could to scout it from the world. But the result of examination—the facts we have been able to collect—the observations we have made—and the effects we have felt arising from its cultivation, have proved that the service of God and the enjoyment of happiness are the same thing.

Will the reader indulge us with his attention while we endeavour to state a few facts which appear to illustrate the nature of happiness, and to enforce its attainment as a duty? We think it by no means difficult to prove that he who lives and dies in a state of misery has neither accomplished the design of his creation, nor fulfilled the benevolent will of the great Author of his nature.

And, in the first place, we would observe that God has formed man capable of the enjoyment of happiness. We are aware that

human beings have fallen from their primeval state of innocence and glory. We know that the nature of man is polluted, that his moral sense is depraved, and that he naturally chooses evil in preference to good. We are deeply conscious, too, that by his conduct man has closed the door of felicity against himself, has provoked the awful and infinite anger of the Sovereign of the universe, and has dared omnipotent justice to consign him to remediless and eternal woe. We have wept over the intellectual and moral powers of man as in ruins ; we have traced all around us the melancholy results of rebellion against God, in the sufferings which humanity endures ; while we have contemplated the future with a fear which conscious rebellion against the Judge of all only could inspire.

But what then? Man has yet a soul which bears so much of the image of the Deity as to be immaterial, to pant for objects more spiritual than earth can give, and to desire something unspeakably grand and important beyond the grave. He yet has powers

which examine and choose among the various objects presented to their view ; which grieve over that which is evil, and rejoice in that which is good ;—which at pleasure can wander over the earth, and even penetrate other worlds ; which grasp at the highest enjoyments congenial with their nature, and stretch their desires through the inconceivable duration of eternity. And for what was this soul formed, if it were not for the enjoyments of which it is still capable, but which it cannot grasp ? The very nature of our spiritual part teaches us that our Creator intended us for a higher state of felicity than we now enjoy, and intimates the vast importance of our strenuous labours to obtain it.

Again, however, are we reminded of the apostacy of human nature, while some would even assert the incapacity of man to enjoy happiness. But then it is an undeniable fact that even our miserable world contains a goodly number of those who have risen above its sorrows, and who already experience a happiness unspeakably greater than what is

known to the majority of their neighbours. It would not be a difficult task to introduce to the notice of the reader those who in the very depths of poverty have yet been joyful. They have laid hold of spiritual objects; they have realized the substantial good of eternity; they have been contented with the very few temporal blessings they possessed, "knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and more enduring substance." These happy persons have surveyed the magnificence of palaces without a wish for their possession; they have looked over the fair scenes of creation, as the work of their own Father; and then they have risen in faith and affection to the upper world, and contemplated an inheritance infinitely transcending the palaces of kings, or even the works of God on earth. Those who live as travellers to so blissful a state, feeling that they are citizens of that pure and happy country, and that they shall most certainly enjoy it, may well be contented amidst the mutable events of a world which shall shortly reach its termination.

Nor have we been without evidences of the possibility of man being happy in the very midst of the mightiest afflictions. We have seen those who have, like Job, been deprived of property, children, and health, who have yet been resigned, cheerful and happy. Nay, we have heard some of these very persons bless God for the sufferings they have thus endured, because they have brought them to a state of reflection, have taught them the utter insufficiency of the world to satisfy them, and have raised their desires to the pure and satisfying blessings of another state.

We have seen more than all this—for we have witnessed joy and triumph in death. We have known the man who has been brought by painful and long disease to the bed of dissolution, who has felt that he must soon close his eyes on all that we think desirable on earth ; that he must shortly separate from his dearest and most affectionate friends ; and that his soul must appear before the bar of an holy and omniscient Judge, while his body descended to the grave, to become food for worms.

O, how much is there in this view of ourselves that is appalling and terrific ! We shrink from the scene, at least hoping it is yet at a great distance. But we have beheld, even at such a time, the eye kindling with joy, the soul beaming with immortality, and the tongue labouring to give expression to thoughts and feelings which angels themselves might envy. The expectation of heavenly and eternal blessedness has swallowed up every other feeling, and the dying friend has been far more desirous of departing hence than those who surrounded his bed could have been for the continuance of life. If man, then, can be thus happy, surely he should aspire after it.

That happiness is the object of the anxious desire, and the constant pursuit, of mankind, is a fact which needs no other proof than an appeal to the feelings of each individual belonging to the human family. Sensible that it was destined for the enjoyment of that which is great and noble, the soul, though it has fallen from its primitive dignity, is ever

pursuing what it has not yet obtained. Man was formed with desires which nothing earthly can gratify, and for the satisfaction of which all created good is insufficient. Though he possessed all the wealth, the honour, and the pleasure which universal nature can bestow, they could not feed the desires of his mind, the only part of him that is above the animal creation. As the essential part of man is a spirit, so his happiness must be of a spiritual nature, in order to be adapted to his state, and to raise him still higher above the material world and its inferior inhabitants.

The most common idea which men seem to entertain of happiness is, that it consists in pleasure; which, in its highest sense, means, the gratification or delight of the mind. One man aims to possess riches, or grasps after honours, that this delight may be inspired in his bosom; another gratifies his varied sensual propensities, because he hopes in this way to enjoy pleasure; while a third seeks the acquirement of knowledge, convinced that this will elevate him above his fellow creatures in

general, and thus feed his proud mental appetite with the consciousness of his decided superiority over them.

It will too generally be seen, that in the pursuit of happiness men are altogether indifferent about the obedience they owe to the laws of God. It is a question which is seldom or never asked, when a feasible plan of pleasure is proposed, will God approve of it? What saith his law on the subject? Man has apostatized from God, and refuses to attend to his requirements. If he does not altogether deny the divine origin of the Bible, he will explain away the force of its requirements, or imagine that the awful threatenings connected with disobedience to the law of Heaven will never be enforced. Though the lip of Eternal Truth has most solemnly declared, that the soul that sinneth shall experience the displeasure of Jehovah, man rushes on with heedless indifference, and incurs the anger of a Being infinitely great. Though the records of inspiration have affirmed, "there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked," man

discredits the divine record, and pursues the ways of iniquity in search of happiness. Such impiety, angels would never have conceived of, had it not been exemplified before them in the case of mankind. Surely it is impossible to imagine wickedness more daring than that of obstinately pursuing an object, in opposition to the command of Heaven, where the infinitely wise God has told us it shall never be found ! While Satan believes the word of Jehovah, and trembles under a sense of his displeasure, man alone dares to reject the divine testimony ; and, in defiance of every moral restraint, to follow the inclination of his own wicked heart.

That the world, in any of its forms, cannot give true happiness, has been proved in thousands and tens of thousands of instances. It can impart wealth ;—but what is its nature ? it is but dust ; and though man may add house to house, and field to field, and fill his purse with gold,—of what use is all this ? He possesses no more than he enjoys. His wealth will not ward off sickness, or keep death at a

distance from his mansion ; it will not preserve his house from misfortune, nor prevent the voice of calamity from entering his ears ; it will not ease the pains of the guilty conscience, nor feed his soul with the only food that can make him happy. It will fill him with anxiety lest he should lose what he possesses ; it will add poignancy to the pain of death ; and after he is laid in the grave may bring on him the curses of the poor, and the dissatisfaction of those among whom he has left it. The world can give honour ; but he who possesses it is the object of envy, and his happiness will be embittered by the machinations of his foes. The possession of honour in itself exposes us to new dangers, while it is uncertain and short in its continuance. The world may introduce us to its society, and lead us to form the most endearing connexions ; but these introduce to new anxieties, and to accumulating sorrows. We have constantly to mourn over the instability of human friendships, while by Providence or by death our dearest companions are torn from our side.

The world affords what are called its pleasures ; but not only are they impure in their origin, and sinful in their nature ; they are unsatisfying, short, and very often only are the precursors to new sorrows. They impair the health, fill the soul with grief, and prepare us for the regions of hopeless despair. And, once more, the world boasts of the stores of knowledge it has to confer on the sons of study and of science. But what is all its information ? it only relates to the scenes of time. The loftiest mind cannot reach the heights of knowledge—the most penetrating student cannot enter the recesses of futurity. When the knowledge of the world, however great, is weighed in the balances of usefulness, it is but light. Study wearies the body and the mind, excites desires which cannot be gratified, leads to questions that cannot be answered, and, after all, the worn-out student has almost laboured for nought ; he is not so wise as the humble Christian, who sees in the Creator of the Universe his father and his friend, and that He who governs the world

overrules all events for the good of his people. All that a man can know of the world, while in the body, is not so much as a single moment shall disclose when he has passed the boundaries of time, and entered on an eternal state.

It is not intended by these remarks to intimate, that the good things of earth are calculated to make man miserable. God hath made everything beautiful in its season and in its place. The melancholy fact is, that, in consequence of the disorder of his mind, produced by the fall, man has placed the world in a station it was never designed to occupy. Everything in nature was intended to contribute to our temporal comfort, and to hold a subordinate place in our affections. But man, having ceased to love God, the source of all genuine felicity, places his best affections on the world, and looks only to it for his enjoyment. Thus, abusing it by making it his idol, the Supreme Being has converted the blessing into a curse, fills the votary of earth with dis-

appointment, and compels him to feel the awful consequences of an improper attachment to created good.

Nor must it be said that the outcry of some persons, that happiness is not to be found on earth, is the discovery of peevish and dissatisfied minds ; who, because they cannot gain all that they want, give up the pursuit, and pretend it to be utterly unattainable. We appeal to the history of mankind, and we ask where is the worldling to be found, the desires of whose soul were satisfied, and who exclaimed in the moment of calm reflection, "I am a happy man !" If ever man had opportunity to be happy on earth it was Solomon ; a prince of more than ordinary talents, of extensive information, of commanding influence, of an inquiring mind, and anxious to possess uninterrupted enjoyment. The result of his experience has been recorded by the pen of inspiration, and must be every way worthy of our consideration. Let him who expects happiness from worldly objects and pursuits

prevail on himself, before he comes to a final decision on the subject, to read the book of Ecclesiastes, and surely he will say with the royal preacher, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Solomon thought to find happiness in wisdom, which is certainly the noblest of human pursuits: but he perceived this to be "vanity and vexation of spirit." He sought it in pleasure, in wealth, and in honour, but his conviction of the vanity of all earthly good was only deepened by every fresh pursuit. He closes the researches and studies of a long life, spent in the pursuit of the highest good, by declaring, that to "fear God, and to keep his commandments, is the whole of man;" the grand design of his existence, the whole duty he has to discharge, and all the happiness he can possibly enjoy.

We see, then, that the wisest of men considered religion to be the source of happiness. In speaking of it elsewhere, he says, "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;" while another of the sacred

writers, who had long "handled, and tasted, and felt," the things of God, assures us that "his commandments are not grievous." They who have read the Bible must have observed the various exhortations with which it abounds to the exercise of joy. This, indeed, is considered by an inspired apostle to be an essential part of religion; for he defines the kingdom of God to be "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." The pleasures of religion are those of the heart; as they are spiritual in their origin and their nature, they are very different from those which are talked of by men in general, which depend on external objects, merely affect the passions, and are soon extinguished. The friend of God may drink of the cup of pleasure, even when all his worldly concerns are in a state of ruin. Christians have "taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods," they have sang praises to God in the gloomy retirement of a prison, and have triumphed at the stake or the scaffold, where they have been led to sacrifice their

lives to the religion of Jesus. The pleasures they enjoyed descended from Heaven, and partook of the nature of their great Author.

Among the innumerable mistakes which exist in the world on the subject of religion, none appears more surprising than the notion that it leads its adherents to melancholy. Could this charge be established, it would reflect dishonour on the Being whom religion claims for its author; it would shew that his wisdom is not perfect, seeing that the very system he gave to bless the world, and restore it to happiness, not only fails in its object, but produces an effect directly contrary to the one it professes to have in view. The very first glance taken of the subject by a reasonable man convinces him that a religion which descends from the God of all grace must have the happiness of man for its object, and that all insinuations to the contrary must have their origin in human depravity, which ever leads us to oppose Jehovah, or with him who is the implacable enemy of the blessed God, who is ever pur-

suings the destruction of man, and who is emphatically styled by Jesus, who came to destroy his works, "the father of lies."

It must be at once evident to the considerate mind, that a mistake on a subject of this nature must involve in it consequences of no ordinary magnitude. If it can be proved that religion is indeed calculated to make the heart sad, and to cherish feelings unfriendly to human happiness, the sooner it is banished the world the better; for, in such a case, it would be seen that its pretensions to a divine origin are fallacious; seeing that the blessed God, infinitely happy in himself, must ever seek the best interests of his creatures. Infidels would then be right in rejecting the revelation of the Bible, and those whose zeal leads them to exert their influence, their talents, and their property, in the spread of the gospel, would be objects of pity. But if, after an impartial examination, it shall appear that it promotes the best interests of man in this world, and prepares him for the everlasting enjoyment of God in

the next ; if we can shew that the gospel of Jesus alone can bear up the mind when oppressed by sorrows, and raise it to a state of triumph on a dying pillow ; then must we rejoice in the possession of such a blessing, lament that any mistakes as to its nature should prevent an attention to its claims, and earnestly wish its knowledge to be as extensive as are the miseries of mankind.

It is a fact which cannot reasonably be doubted, that the idea entertained of religion leading to the indulgence of gloom, and that it can only live in the soul deluged in sorrow, has prevented many persons, and especially those in the bloom of life, who are naturally disposed to gaiety, from embracing it. They have reasonably concluded, that what was calculated to make them unhappy could not be good. And where it has not led to an entire denial of the truth of Revelation, but where conscience has, in some degree, asserted its rights, it has prompted the youth to treat religion as a stern and imperious tyrant,

whose claims, though they must be attended to, may yet be deferred till some future time. The evil consequences of such a mistake are incalculable, whether we consider the loss of happiness to the individual, and the positive danger to which it exposes him, or contemplate the negative injury, at least, that it inflicts on the church of Christ, and, indeed, on the world at large. Over such a mistake an angel might weep, while the omnipotence of Jehovah is employed to correct it.

On these accounts it appears desirable that every attempt should be made to oppose the error, and to diffuse light on a subject in which the happiness of the world is, to a considerable degree, involved. To spread correct views of the truth of God on this subject, is to scatter blessings among the sons of misery and of woe. Such is the wish of the writer, while he would aim to convey a sense of its importance to the heart of every reader. The power to bless is of God, and till he scatters the darkness of the

understanding, man will remain wilfully blind and ignorant of "the things that belong to his peace."

Before we advance, however, to the object before us, it may not be improper to inquire who they are that prefer the charge of its tending to produce melancholy. Are they those who have diligently studied its nature, and who have been familiarly acquainted with its properties? Have they cordially welcomed Religion as an angel of mercy to their bosoms, and thankfully accepted of her proffered blessings? Have they cheerfully walked in her ways, and attended to all her requirements? Alas, no! they have no knowledge of her, except from those who are decidedly prejudiced against her character. They would never listen to her voice, or place themselves even for a day under the government of her laws. They have listened to the charges brought against her by her enemies, and have joined them in bearing false witness against her. We would not accept the evidence of a blind man as to the beauty of

scenery he never witnessed, nor would we listen to the lectures of one who was deaf on the doctrine of sounds ; and why, then, on the most important of all subjects, that which will concern us for ever, should we be satisfied with the testimony of an enemy ?

And we would beg leave to remark farther, that it is not false religion, but that of the gospel which administers true enjoyment. That some of the truths of revelation may have been placed in a very unlovely light by some of their professors is very probable ; but religion is not to be charged with the faults of its enemies, nor even with the improprieties of its genuine friends. It is the system which has God for its author, and revelation for its basis, that we contend for as being amiable in its own nature, and beneficial in its effects. It never frowns but at sin, nor reproves except when its doctrines have been rejected, or its admonitions treated with neglect. To those who are unacquainted with her she may appear to wear the aspect of severity ; but they who approach, and exercise confidence in

her, find that "in her right hand is length of days, and in her left hand riches and honour."

It is not our object to prove that all the professors of religion are filled with enjoyment. It is an acknowledged fact, that the hypocrite and the formalist are incapable of tasting its bliss. They profess to wear the yoke of Christ, but possess nothing of his spirit; they assume the garb of religion, but are destitute of its power. Various motives have induced them to make a profession of attachment to the cause of the gospel, and perhaps to appear among the most forward in its ranks; but they retire from it with pleasure, throw off the mask, dismiss the shackles by which they have been restrained, and derive their enjoyment from the world. They possessed no more of Christianity than its name, and, never having known Christ, must needs be unhappy in the assumption of a character so much opposed to their natural inclinations.

Nor will we attempt to conceal the fact,

that many true Christians are subject to depression and melancholy. This, however, is not owing to their religion: it is frequently to be attributed to a settled constitutional malady, which they would have had to endure, and that to a greater degree, had they never heard of religion. For it is certain that, in many cases where true piety is possessed, it softens the rigour of the disease, and administers support to the mind of the patient. The period when such persons rise above themselves is, when the gospel of Jesus applies its balm to the soul; then the man is filled with a peace and serenity which the whole world could never have given.

CHAPTER II.

PROVISION MADE FOR THE HAPPINESS OF MAN.

Religion is all lovely and serene,
Peace in her bosom, beauty in her mien,
Smiles on her lips, and sun light on her brow,
Safe for eternity, and happy now.

EDMESTON.

WE are sometimes told that happiness is not the lot of men in general; and the melancholy fact is, that the human race are plunged into a state of misery. We cannot have forgotten that man has lost his primitive innocence, that he has departed from the only source of happiness, and that he has voluntarily chosen the path of moral wretchedness and eternal misery. Alas ! the whole world too clearly establishes these awful facts. But what then ? The delightful truth is,—and it ought to be received with indescribable gratitude,—that *the blessed God has made an infinite provision*

for the happiness of man ! He has not abandoned us to the misery which our sins have called for ; he has not yet raised the omnipotent arm of his justice to cut down the guilty rebels of the family of Adam. Though Satan combines with the world and our native depravity to effect our ruin, yet has he hitherto restrained their power, and blessed us with a thousand evidences of his kindness.

But the benevolence of the Deity is not only shewn in “ suffering our manners,” and in staying the execution of his threatenings ; he has “ so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son ; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Trite as this subject may appear to my reader, it is one which has ever occupied the heart of the Deity, excited the astonishment of angels, and filled with gratitude and rapture the whole host of celestial spirits. Who can tell the value of this gift ? Let the infinite dignity of the Son of God be remembered, the glory which he laid aside, and the humiliation to which he submitted ; let the

various events of his life be traced ; his sermons heard, and his miracles be witnessed ; let his sufferings in his body, his reputation, and his soul, be taken into the account ; let the greatness of his work be estimated, and its completeness admired ; and, finally, let my reader, if he can, conceive of the misery from which Christ saves the penitent sinner, and the happiness to which he introduces him ; and then let him say whether the blessed God has not done much to promote the happiness of the human family, and whether it must not be the duty of man to accept the happiness which has thus been provided for him. Let us, my dear reader, thankfully listen to the instructions of this great Teacher, accept his gracious invitations, and cast ourselves entirely on his mercy.

Nor does the provision of infinite benevolence for the happiness of man stop even here. We are blest with an order of means, by the direct appointment of Heaven, to make us acquainted with the designs and requirements of Jehovah, all of which have the

closest bearing on our present and eternal happiness. To say nothing of the lessons to be derived from the objects which God has created, and from his ordinary conduct in the government of the world, we are favoured with the volume of inspired truth,—the sabbaths of the Lord, the ministry of the gospel, and many other opportunities of becoming acquainted with the things which are inseparably connected with our present and eternal enjoyment. It was a merciful arrangement of His providence who knew our liability to forget him, and to neglect our own welfare, to appoint that a seventh portion of our time should be taken from the concerns of the world, and devoted to those of the soul and eternity. Thus are we compelled, as it were, to hold communion with ourselves on our future happiness, and with Him from whom descends every good and perfect gift. The man who slights or misimproves the sabbath of God, at once commits rebellion against Heaven ; casts away from him the joys of eternity, by refusing to

prepare for them; tempts Satan to bring before him what may still more harden his heart and increase his depravity; and throws open still more widely the gates of hell, which previously invited his entrance.

Still more to prove to us how fully he is intent on our happiness, the blessed God has scattered throughout the volume of Divine revelation the most affectionate and persuasive invitations to the acceptance of the blessings he has provided for us. Those invitations, while they declare the vanity of the present world, beautifully illustrate the happiness of another, and present to us the Fountain of felicity, as ever ready to satisfy, from the infinite stores of His love, every want of which we can be the subjects.

And, in addition to all these favours, fully aware of our disinclination to seek his favours, and of the difficulty of our depraved hearts fully to appreciate their value, he promises that his Holy Spirit shall be afforded, in all his gracious influences, to all who desire the inestimable blessing. Nothing can be more

interesting to a well-constituted mind than to think of the blessed God condescending to offer himself as a guide to right conduct and suitable feelings, leading his children to the performance of duty and the enjoyment of peace. With what confidence may we, in such a case, adopt the exhortation and the argument of an inspired apostle, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure."

The design of religion, whatever forms it may assume, is to bring man to God, whom it universally presents as the only source of true bliss. Whatever part of the world we visit, whatever system we examine, or whatever sect we consult, we find this principle recognised. But it must be acknowledged, that most of the systems which obtain in the world fail of accomplishing their object; for men, generally speaking, are yet unhappy. Nor is it difficult to account for this. If the blessed God has made a revelation of his will, all true religion must agree with it; but

it cannot be even pretended that the majority of systems which pass under this holy name are at all accordant with the sacred volume. How then can they answer the desired end? We never expect that counterfeit coin, when it is once detected, will obtain for us from our fellow-men the comforts of life: and can it be supposed that serving God in a way different to what he has commanded will lead to true enjoyment?

On the subject of the inadequacy of the prevalent systems of religion to accomplish their professed objects, Bishop Sherlock has the following very admirable remarks:—

“ The end of all religion is manifestly this, to please God by serving him according to his will, in order to obtain of him happiness in this world and in the next; for the belief that God is the governor of the world, and the giver of every good thing, is the foundation of all the religious worship and honour which are paid to him. All religions being thus far the same, they differ when they come to prescribe the method, and to appoint the

proper means by which God is to be served and applied to.

“ Two things there are, which must necessarily be regarded in the choice and appointment of these means ; the holiness and majesty of God, and the nature and condition of man ; for unless the means prescribed are such as are suitable to the holiness and majesty of God, he can never be pleased by them ; for whatever is contrary to his holiness, or injurious to his majesty, must ever be an abomination to him. On the other hand, the means of religion must likewise be adapted to the use of man ; must be such as he can practise, and such as, his present condition considered, will enable him to serve God acceptably ; for without this, how proper soever the means may be in themselves, yet they can be of no use or service to him.

“ If we examine all the schemes of religion which either prevail in those parts of the world where the gospel is unknown, or which are set up in opposition to the gospel where it is known, we shall find that they split upon

one or other of these rocks. The Gentile religion is inconsistent with the holiness of God, as mixing impure rites and ceremonies with its worship, and allowing the practice of such vices as even nature abhors : it is injurious likewise to his majesty, as dividing the honour which is due to him alone among the creatures : teaching men to pay religious worship to those who by nature are not gods. On the other side, natural religion, which seems to be the most growing scheme, and is set up in opposition to the gospel, taking its rise from the purity and holiness of God's nature, and the essential difference of good and evil, prescribes a worship pure and holy ; but it prescribes it to men who have lost their purity and holiness, and are no longer able to perform the rigorous conditions ; it requires brick without allowing straw ; exacting of men, in their present degenerate state, the purity and holiness of uncorrupted reason and nature : it affords no strength or assistance to men, to secure against sin ; and when they have sinned, it cannot

give them any certain assurance of pardon and forgiveness ; so that men, not being able to perform its conditions, and having no security of the mercy of God without performing them, can have no settled peace or satisfaction in it."

It is a distinguishing excellence of Christianity, that it is adapted to the fallen condition of man : it is glad tidings to perishing sinners. It sees man far from happiness, and hasting rapidly to ruin ; and, like the angel of mercy, descends from the throne of Jehovah, points to the cross of the Saviour, directs the sinner to seek the favour of God through the blood of atonement, and to walk in the path of holiness, which must confer present, and conduct to future happiness.

Few words are used in a greater latitude of meaning than is that of *Religion*. We frequently use it without conveying any very distinct ideas, and at some other times what we mean may be misunderstood. There are two very distinct senses in which the word is employed, and of which it is of importance to

have clear views. We sometimes mean by the term the *object* which religion contemplates ; hence we speak of the Religion of the Bible, and the Religion of Nature ; the Christian Religion, and the Pagan ; the Popish Religion, and the Reformed : at other times, we consider it as relating to the *subject* whom it concerns ; and then we mean the dispositions it creates in the heart of man, and the conduct to which it leads. The view we now take of it will, in some degree, include both these. We consider religion as a disposition of heart, produced by the Holy Spirit of God, by means of the word of truth, which raises a man above the pursuits of the present world, leads him to the worship and obedience of God, and prepares him for the enjoyment of heaven. This religion is divine in its origin, spiritual in its nature, and holy and benevolent in its designs. Let us endeavour to examine this view of it, and see how far it is calculated to produce happiness in the hearts of those who possess it.

Such is the unhappy state of man, that till

an entire change takes place in his nature, he cannot possibly enjoy the felicity of which his soul is capable, and for which it was originally created. The benevolent design of the Creator was, that the affections of man should be placed on himself, as the great source of his happiness, and that he should look to his gracious hand for the supply of all his wants. So long as Adam did this, he was filled with enjoyment, but when he turned from Jehovah to seek happiness in created good, he became miserable. From that period to the present, the dispositions of men have been sinful—their hearts “have been fully set in them to do evil”—and an awful progress has been made in the ways of iniquity. The world has presented a scene of dreadful warfare; the millions of its inhabitants have formed a mighty army, who have taken up the weapons of rebellion, and appeared against the God who made them, resolving to cast off the restraints of his law, and to be governed by their own wayward inclinations, which have formed an alliance with Satan, the prince

of the power of the air. Jehovah, on the other hand, in the convulsions of nature, in the dispensations of his providence, and in the threatenings of his word, affords awful proofs of his displeasure against sin. The result of such a contest cannot be doubtful; and we ask, can that man be happy, or can he be the subject of pleasure, who is thus opposed to the Being who made him, and who must consider his Creator his enemy? If, indeed, he has peace of any kind, it is that awful and portentous stillness which precedes the dreadful conflict in which the sinner shall assuredly fall, and from which he shall descend to the regions of punishment and despair.

Before a rebel, like man, can be happy, the opposition towards God that reigns in his heart must be destroyed, and the affections of his soul receive a new bias; the fear of the consequences of sin, under which he must constantly labour, must be removed, and the pursuits of his life be changed. Now we appeal, both to the nature of the change required, and to all the observation of the world

we have been able to make, whether or not man possesses a natural disposition to make peace with God, to return to his service, and to render him due homage? We ask, does man possess a single desire to be happy in the only way in which God can make him so? That he would be filled with pleasure, we know, but are those pleasures pure? Are they such in which an angel would delight; or are they of a nature that would satisfy the soul, fallen and depraved as it is? The answer which must be given is easily anticipated, and leads to the conclusion, that a change must be produced, and that true religion can only be implanted in the heart of man by Divine power. This fact accords with the whole tenour of scripture; which universally represents the return of man to God as the effect of influence exerted on his mind by the Holy Spirit. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil:"—"And he shall convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment."—

“God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ :”—“And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.”

We see, then, that if religion exists in the heart at all, the principles of it must have been implanted there by the Spirit of God ; and if it has not its residence in the heart, whatever pretensions a man may make, he has deceived himself if he supposes that he possesses true religion. Now here we pause, and appeal to scripture and to reason, and ask, would God exert his influence on the mind of man to make him unhappy ? It is true that in the process which the soul undergoes in turning from the slavery of sin to the service of God, there must be some painful feelings—there must fall some bitter tears of repentance. But this sorrow arises, not from his engaging in the service of God, but from painful regret that he did not enter it sooner ; it is not because he is now under the restraints

of religion, but because he was so long the servant of sin; it is not because he is brought nigh to God, but from grief that he so long wandered from the only source of happiness. In this grief there is indeed a holy joy, and this repentance leads to happiness here, and to a world of felicity beyond the grave. Hence, when many Christians are first taught the true nature of religion, and are enabled to believe the gospel testimony concerning Jesus, they "are filled with joy unspeakable, and full of glory," which they then imagine can never end, but will continue to increase till they behold Him in whom they will rejoice throughout eternity.

Here, then, is the religion which brings us to God, assures us of our reception of pardon at his hands, eases our consciences of a sense of deserved punishment, and instructs us in the knowledge of the Divine will. Tell us, ye wise men, what there is in all this to lead us to melancholy? Does not religion, instead of creating gloom, even in the estimation of reason, fill the soul with a pleasure of which

philosophy never dreamt, and which the votary of mere worldly amusement cannot possibly enjoy ?

The religion for which we contend is not the enthusiasm of which we so often hear, but is founded on a volume that affords a thousand proofs of its divinity. Hence it is frequently spoken of as being the exercise of faith, or “the belief of the truth.” And what is there in the Bible that is calculated to make us unhappy ? Were the Gentile nations, who were involved in the thick gloom of moral darkness, happier than we are ; or are the parts of the globe where idolatry and superstition now govern men more blessed than those who possess the Scriptures ? Does not the Bible prove an eminent blessing to the world ? But for this, in what a state must we have remained ! How ignorant of God ! How exposed to the designs of our spiritual foes ! How awfully gloomy and uncertain the prospect of another world ! How sublime are the doctrines taught us by this sacred volume ! what a revelation of mercy does it make !

and what a world of eternal glory and happiness does it reveal for all who believe in its facts, set their love on its Author, and walk in the ways he has marked out !

It is true that infidels have objected to the Bible ; but for what reason ? Because it opposes their sins,—it shews the inseparable connexion between transgression and punishment,—it declares man to be in a lost and ruined state, and invites him, as a guilty sinner, to the cross of Christ for pardon. Now it is true that there is something in all this very humbling to a proud and carnal mind : there is much to destroy the happiness which men are seeking ; and, till a change takes place in the heart, till a man is begotten again by the exercise of faith in the word of truth, he must remain unhappy. But let him examine the evidences of this book, let him receive it as the word of Jehovah, and what a change does he experience ! Every doctrine in the sacred volume gives him pleasure, because it shews him the grace of God providing for his salvation, his purity,

and his joy ; every fact it records is an attestation that they who are opposed to God are miserable ; while those who enjoy his friendship see all the events of his providence conspiring for their good. Every prophecy yields him happiness ; because, while " it confirms the truth the more," he sees all the perfections of Deity engaged in the fulfilment of his word. Every miracle increases his confidence, for it displays the Creator opposing and overturning the laws of nature to add to the enjoyments of his people. Every invitation makes him happy ; because it draws him nearer to the source of felicity, and makes him welcome to drink with holy joy out of the wells of salvation. Every promise affords him encouragement amidst the trials of life, gives him peace in the midst of confusion, and affords the promise of unspeakable and eternal bliss beyond the grave. And is not the belief of the Bible, then, calculated to make us happy ? If it be not, what is ?

Has not the belief of the sacred volume a tendency to fill us with the noblest and

purest pleasure, as it throws a flood of celestial light upon our path, that we may know the nature, the character, and the way to enjoy the friendship of Deity? Does not the soul rejoice in the view here given of the Divine procedure in the government of the world, all the affairs of which so eminently tend to the good of those who love him? Are we not delighted when we read the numerous invitations we here receive to approach "the Father of mercies, and the God of all grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need"? Are we not raised to an enjoyment unknown to the mere worldling, when we contemplate the promises that raise us above the frowns of the world, and inspire us with an order of feelings which we once supposed to be only enthusiasm? And, above all, what feelings of ecstasy are produced when we consider the world of immortal glory and happiness which the Bible unfolds to the Christian, and which, as followers of the Saviour, we hope to enjoy!

We have said that religion is designed to raise us above the world. It does this by shewing us its true nature and value, and placing before us an object infinitely more worthy our pursuit. That men are apt to form too high an estimate of the present state is evident from the disappointments daily experienced by those who attain its good, as well as those who do not. Now, is it not infinitely kind in Him who made us to tell us the true character of a world which tempts our regards? And must it not tend to our happiness to be warned of our enemies, and to be invited to objects that cannot fail in their bestowment of pleasure? It is not the design of religion to draw us from the pleasures of the present state, and give us nothing in their stead. She proposes objects infinitely worthy of our esteem, while

“She points to better worlds, and leads the way.”

And when we are enabled to see the glories of heaven, and to indulge a hope, founded on the immutable word of Jehovah, of enjoying it, is it at all surprising that the good

man cares but little for the present state? Nay, would he not prove that his profession of religion was vain if he could pursue the world with his former avidity? Here again, then, we ask, must not the man be filled with happiness who looks above the present world, and, confidently expecting another, devotes himself entirely to preparation for it? The pleasures of the world must be vain and trifling in themselves, and short in their duration; but those which descend from God are satisfying in their nature, and eternal in their existence.

It is the design of the gospel to bring us to God. It points out the way in which alone we can receive the pardon of our multiplied transgressions, and be interested in the Divine favour; it exhibits a salvation infinite in its blessings, and free in its bestowments, while it shews us how the vilest and guiltiest may possess it; it presents the Divine character as infinitely amiable and lovely, and inclines us to pay him the worship that he so justly requires of us; and it dis-

poses us to obey the commands which result from infinite wisdom, purity, and benevolence. And is there not everything in this view of the subject to fill the heart with pleasure? What can be more delightful than the fact that, without money and without price, we may be reconciled to God by the death of his Son? What gives happiness to the exalted minds of angels, but the contemplation of the Divine character, and paying him worship and obedience? Oh, if the possession of the Divine favour and the employment of angels will not make a man happy, we know not what will.

Finally, it is the province of religion to prepare its possessors for the enjoyment of the heavenly world. Let the awful descriptions given us of the region of despair in the inspired records be well considered, and all must enjoy pleasure in the thought, that though we have deserved this punishment, we may be delivered from it. On the other hand, let the glowing and beautiful views given us in the same volume of the heavenly

world be contemplated, and who will not rejoice that this heaven may be obtained, and welcome, as the best of blessings, the religion which endows us with its dispositions while yet on earth, and gradually prepares us for its eternal joys? If religion were all sorrows,—if it consisted in the mortifications and penances which some of its mistaken votaries have enjoined,—when we considered its end, we might be filled with pleasure; but when we remember that even now “her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace,” we clasp her to our hearts as our best friend, we submit to her guidance, and travel with her to the celestial world.

CHAPTER III.

THE DOCTRINES AND DUTIES OF EVANGELICAL RELIGION PRODUCTIVE OF HAPPINESS.

The Scripture is the only cure of wo ;
That field of promise, how it flings abroad
Its odour o'er the Christian's thorny road !
The soul, reposing on assured relief,
Feels herself happy amidst all her grief ;
Forgets her labours as she toils along,
Weeps tears of joy and bursts into a song.

COWPER.

It is a circumstance by no means unworthy of our remark, that the charge brought against religion as tending to melancholy has been preferred, not by thoughtful and sensible men, but by the vain and trifling. Depraved as men universally are, there is yet a voice heard in every soul declaring that religion is important, and indeed essential, to human happiness. In proof of this, we refer to the conduct of the different nations of the earth,

all of whom, in some way or other, attend to something they call religion. And seldom have we heard of those who are required to submit to the most painful privations and sufferings, to please their imagined deities, complain of the austerities and sufferings of piety. Men of the least degree of reflection in our own country seldom prefer the charge of melancholy against what they conceive to be religion itself, but against the representations given of it in the sacred volume. Many persons have told us of the pleasure they have felt in the contemplation of the Divine character, and his wisdom and goodness as displayed in his works; but they say that revelation exhibits him in an unlovely view, and teaches doctrines inconsistent with human happiness. This has been said, but not proved, and we yet challenge proof of the charge. In the meantime, we shall endeavour to remove what (in the absence of proof to the contrary) we consider a mistake, and to shew, by the happy effects which a belief of the truth produces on the heart, that

the religion of Jesus makes its possessor happy.

In our last chapter we endeavoured to take a general view of this religion, and to display its influence in producing happiness; let us now descend to particulars, and in the present examine the doctrines and the duties of Christianity. Here, if anywhere, we shall find the gloom of which we have heard; and if the truths taught, and the duties enjoined, can furnish the mind with pleasure, we may rest satisfied that the object we have had in view is accomplished.

In pursuing our reflections on this subject, it will be well to bear in mind that Christianity is not a system of uncertainties. It is founded on a volume which presents a thousand evidences of its divinity, and claims our belief as emanating from the Spirit of Truth. All the discoveries of revelation, too, are of the utmost moment. They relate to the soul, and associate themselves with eternity. A period will speedily arrive, when the things of the world will be of no importance; at

that time the discoveries of religion will exhibit all their value, and disclose their everlasting realities. As the things of earth recede from our view, those of religion will fully appear to our sight. If they have been neglected, how great the sorrow we must feel ; and if their importance and value have been known, how delightful the scenes to which we shall be introduced, and how lasting the pleasures that we shall experience !

That God is a Being possessed of infinite perfections, which make him worthy of our supreme regard, and that we stand in the relation of subjects bound to know, to love, and to serve him, are facts which cannot be disputed. But if we reject the Bible, how can we know him ? or how can we understand either the nature or the degree of obedience he requires of us ? And can that man be happy who remains in a state of uncertainty of what will please his Maker ; and who can, by the most diligent study of his works in creation and providence, only obtain a slight degree of knowledge of him ? For “who

by searching" the works of his hands "can find out God? who can find out the Almighty to perfection?"

And if we admit the fact, which Deists themselves cannot deny, that man is not at present in his primitive state of dignity and glory, a question arises of the highest moment, "How can man be just with God?" For, if he be infinitely great and holy, to offend his law must place us in danger; and to know how sin may be pardoned must be a concern of the deepest interest and importance. Now it is only the religion which takes revelation for its basis that can shew us how this forgiveness may be obtained from Jehovah, peace imparted to the conscience, and man restored to his original happiness.

In the gospel we behold a revelation of mercy. Here appears Jesus the equal of Jehovah, as a substitute for the lost and the guilty. We are led to contemplate him as dying for our sins, and atoning to Divine Justice for our transgressions. Thus, while he shews forth all the glorious perfections of Jehovah

in their most attractive form, he provides salvation for sinners, built on a sure foundation, and eternal in the benefits it confers on its subjects.

The leading doctrine of Christianity is the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ; and while this most interesting subject is presented to our notice, we are taught that the only way by which we can be justified from our sins in the sight of God is by the exercise of faith in the Divine testimony concerning Jesus, and a consequent dependence upon him for salvation. And what is there here that is gloomy? Can he who is seeking the favour of God by the infliction of bodily tortures, by the presentation of expensive sacrifices, or by the performance of a long round of duties, be happier than he who approves of God's own plan of salvation, and who expects heaven as the gift of mere mercy? He who rejects the atonement of Jesus, and hopes to attain happiness by his own works, feels that all his exertions do not satisfy or purify his conscience;—they do not remove the dread

of death,—they do not open a clear prospect of immortality. But the man who places a reliance on the record of truth, who believes in Jesus, and who feels that his blood has cleansed him from all sin, knows that his hopes are founded on the stone laid in Zion by Jehovah himself; he dreads not the curse of a broken law, he lives above the vain pursuits of his neighbours, and finally expects to conquer death, by power derived from the mighty Conqueror who deprived him of his sting, and who enables his people to triumph over him too. Can such a man as this be unhappy? If Christians are not filled with unspeakable joy, it is because their faith is weak;—because they have not religion enough, and not because they have too much.

But it may be objected, that though this view of evangelical religion be favourable to human happiness, yet it has been presented, by Calvin and others, in a most unlovely and gloomy dress; and that his system of doctrines has usually been associated with all that is melancholy in its nature, and

all that is pernicious in its effects. I need not, in reply to this charge, remind my reader that what is said of a system by its opponents must be received with caution ; I admit that John Calvin was nothing more than a fallible man, and equally liable with others to error, both in doctrine and practice, and that some things he taught as truths cannot be established by the great standard of appeal—the sacred volume. If the good man, in his zeal for some parts of truth, wandered from “the midst of the paths of judgment,” and was found bordering on the regions of error, I defend him not ; but I confess that the leading doctrines he taught appear to me drawn from the inspired volume, and have a powerful tendency to promote the happiness of man.

Does the Calvinist believe and teach, that before the commencement of time the blessed God, “for purposes of his own glory, fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass ?” And what is there so gloomy in this ? Nay, is it not rather a thought of the most delightful kind, that the events which occur, however

they may appear to us involved in mystery, and perplex and distress us, were all determined on, and are brought to pass, by Infinite Wisdom? Is it not a thought on which we may repose with pleasing satisfaction, that all things are regulated by a Being of righteousness and love, who will ultimately explain the whole of his conduct, and shew how they all accomplished the designs of his infinite wisdom and benevolence in the happiness of all who love him? Every good workman directs his operations by a previously concerted plan, and, as William III. once remarked, predestination is God's plan. And, surely, there can be nothing very distressing and melancholy in the thought that this plan was resolved on before God had created the world! Ours would indeed be an unhappy state if human affairs were only directed by human wisdom; —miserable as we now are, we should then be more so.

But then, says the objector, Calvinists tell us that salvation is confined to those persons whom they represent as "the elect;" and

this must be a very gloomy doctrine to those who are not elected. Now, let us inquire, does the objector believe the fact that the human heart is depraved; and can he point out the man who possesses the Divine favour, as displayed in the pardon of his sins, who was not first inclined to seek that favour by Divine influence exerted on his mind? God alone can pardon sins; and all those whose transgressions are forgiven were taught by him to pray for that pardon, and inclined by him to believe the testimony of his word. Now if this be granted, in connexion with another fact which cannot be denied—that many persons hear the Gospel who are not finally saved—must it not follow that there is a choice of objects on which that influence is exerted? And what is that choice but the election of grace for which we contend? When we remember that such is the awful apostacy of mankind from God, that none are inclined to do good, but if left to ourselves we should all perish, is it not a pleasing thought that God has determined on the cer-

tain salvation of a multitude which no man can number, out of every nation and people, whom he will bring to the knowledge of himself, and make happy for ever? The Church of England has well declared the tendency of this doctrine in the seventeenth article, where she says, "The godly consideration of predestination and our election in Christ is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ mortifying the works of the flesh and their earthly members, and drawing up their minds to high and heavenly things, as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm the faith of eternal salvation, to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God."

But it will, perhaps, be said, that this is the only favourable view which can be taken of the subject, and though it may give encouragement to those who possess the assurance of sharing in the mercy, yet that it discourages those who do not possess such confidence, but who, nevertheless, long for an interest in the

Divine favour. That the doctrine of election, like every other truth of religion, may be abused, will not admit of a denial ; but that it tends to discourage an application for mercy on the part of a penitent sinner cannot be allowed. It would be strange, indeed, if a determination avowed on the part of Jehovah to save a countless number of the human race should necessarily operate as an argument why we should not apply to him for salvation. That it may in some instances, for a short time, have this effect, is granted ; but then the person who is thus influenced by it furnishes another proof that such is the darkness and perversity of the human heart that if God did not enlighten us and incline us to his ways we should be all lost. Instead of the doctrine of election discouraging the penitent, it ought, as in some cases it has done, to produce a directly contrary effect. Such an one might say, " The Holy Spirit of God, by the means of his word, has taught me that I am a sinner, and has caused me to feel it as I have never done before, and as no human being

could have made me feel it ; and such an exertion of his influence on my heart must be the effect of his design.—He has told me, also, that there is mercy to be shewn to the sons and daughters of guilt through the atonement of Jesus. He tells me that God has resolved on the salvation of every sinner who believes in his Son. ‘I will trust, therefore, and not be afraid ;’ He who has given me a disposition to believe, has given it me as the effect of electing mercy.” Thus even the gloomy and awful doctrine of election, as it has been called, a doctrine so frequently represented as opposed to all that is holy, and as encouraging all that is abominable, may be productive of enjoyment to the humble penitent not yet possessed of the full assurance of hope, as well as to the established Christian who is enabled to feed on the strongest and richest doctrines of the word of life.

Another peculiarity of the Calvinistic creed is that of the certainty of the Christian’s perseverance in the paths of holiness, and the security he possesses of his finally enjoying

the happiness of heaven. The tendency of this doctrine to promote peace and satisfaction of mind is so evident, that to dwell upon it is perfectly unnecessary.

We may, perhaps, be reminded that there are other doctrines connected with Christianity, at which we have not glanced, the tendency of which to produce happiness is by no means evident. Such, for instance, is that of the eternal condemnation of the finally impenitent. Now it would be easy to reply to this, that in the present fallen state of man a revelation of mercy without a display of Divine anger against sin is not to be expected; or we might say, that such is the awful nature of rebellion against God, that the consistency of his character demands a splendid display of his justice; but we would rather meet the objector on another ground. And we remind him, that though the pencil of religion has painted in colours awfully glowing the horrors of the world to come, it is done that we may avoid the path that leads to it; and threatenings of the most awful kind are re-

corded on the page of inspiration to warn us from the paths of misery, and to preserve our feet in the ways of peace. And is it not a subject of delight that God has provided us with cautions to keep us from evil as well as with directions and encouragements to guide us in the paths of duty?

We now turn to the *duties* enjoined by evangelical religion, and consider the path in which she has commanded us to walk. And let us examine whether there is anything here that will make us unhappy. It appears to have been in reference to the duties of religion that Solomon spake, when he said, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

The duties of Christianity may be divided into two classes, those which relate to God, and those connected with man. In reference to the duties we owe to God, it may be remarked, that there are certain feelings towards him which we ought to possess, and certain commands which we ought to obey. Nothing can be more reasonable than that we should

love our Creator. This is a duty that he has enjoined, and it lies at the foundation of all other duties. Now we must all have known that love is the source of happiness, and that the object on whom our regard is fixed is considered the source of our pleasure. If to love a fellow-creature, or anything which this world presents, gives us happiness, what must it be to place our best affections on the great Author of felicity himself? The blessed Jehovah equally consulted his own glory and the happiness of man when he said to him, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength;" for without a consciousness of our love to God we possess no assurance that he loves us, and reason may be left to decide whether man can be happy if but a suspicion lurk in his bosom that the God of the Universe is not his friend.

There are various forms which this love must assume, and different ways in which it must be displayed; all of them, however, tend to ennoble and to bless the mind. Sometimes

it must be shewn in the patience with which we sustain the trials that God lays upon us, and the resignation we manifest when he deprives us of our comforts. Our love to him must be seen in our contentment with the allotments of his providence, and the temperate use we make of the good things with which we may be blest. That love must be displayed in our exercising faith in his promises in the hour of trial, and by our rejoicing in him even when the world denies its comforts to us. Such was the love of an ancient patriarch towards the God of Israel, that he said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;" and such the regard of the prophet Habakkuk, that he sang, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Can a purer, nobler joy be conceived of than that of the man who can

thus speak? If the love of God shed abroad in the heart will not produce pleasure the most refined and satisfactory, we challenge the universe to say what will!

Nor will obedience to the commands of God be less productive of enjoyment than the feelings we should bear towards him. If we love him, we shall ever be concerned to worship him; and whether we are in his public courts, at the family altar, or in private retirement, we shall be anxious to pay him the grateful adoration of our souls. It is true, that to him who possesses not the spirit of God his worship appears little less than slavery; but let our hearts be filled with faith and love, and then we shall say, with the Psalmist, "It is a good thing for me to draw near to God." To approach his seat, to hold intercourse with him, to receive spiritual favours at his hands, and to imbibe his spirit, will be the delight of our souls. The worldling has often wondered when he has seen the avidity of the Christian in attending on the worship of God, or has witnessed his

anxiety to obey whatever laws he has enjoined in his word ; and often has the good man on such occasions been the object of pity. Ah ! little have such persons known the holy peace which has dwelt in his soul, or imagined the pleasure he has experienced. While his wicked neighbours have been writhing under the smart conscience has inflicted, or perhaps suffering more visibly on account of their transgressions, he has been a partaker of the delight of angels, the whole of whose bliss is derived from the service in which they are engaged, and “the joy of the Lord is” felt to be their “strength.” Tell us not of the pleasures of sin while we can enjoy those of angels :—conduct us not to the rivulets of worldly enjoyment while we can drink happiness pure at the fountain head in heaven.

And if we have found that the discharge of our duties towards God will fill us with pleasure, an examination of those we owe to man will increase it. What are the dispositions we are commanded to cultivate towards our fellow creatures ? Are they not all comprised in

this : "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself?" If we examine the state of the world, we shall find that all its miseries spring from wicked dispositions. Men hate God and each other, and hence they cannot be happy. The spirit of the gospel is one of justice, of benevolence, and of kindness; and wherever it is possessed, it makes the individual happy in himself, and constrains him to seek the happiness of all around him. Not only does it check the evil dispositions of the heart, but it eventually destroys them; it forbids all malice, uncharitableness, or the return of evil for evil. It does more, for it commands us to seek the good, spiritual and temporal, of all our fellow-men, to promote their interest in civil society, and especially to seek the eternal welfare of their souls. Oh! what a spirit of benevolence is this! If there be a luxury in doing good, here we may enjoy it in rich abundance. Moses and Paul, animated by public spirit, inspired by the volume of revelation, were content to sacrifice much of their own personal comfort, yea even their lives, for the sake of their

brethren ; and they enjoyed in all this a pleasure of which the statesman or the hero know nothing. Religion, to say all in a word, is designed to conform us to the moral image of the blessed God, and to make us act like him ; and if God can be unhappy, the Christian may be so, and not else.

Now to all this it may be objected, that the practice of religious duties requires the exercise of self-denial, and calls upon us to do many things to which we are naturally opposed. This witness is true, and what then ? If, unhappily, a child would seize an instrument that would inflict on him bodily injury, or would swallow a draught that would operate on his system as poison, would it be lessening his real happiness and pleasure to deny his request ? Or does it eventually lessen the pleasures of a man if in childhood he is compelled to acquire lessons which it does not accord with his naturally slothful disposition to learn ? In this case it might be said that the very discipline to which he is now required to submit is designed to prepare

him for future happiness and pleasure. Precisely thus is it with the requirements of God. Self-denial is required, but strength equal to the exigency of the case is imparted ; pleasure is experienced in the act itself after the trial is past, and shall be more especially felt in the world of unmingled felicity, where self-denial is unknown. To that state the pious David referred when he said : " Thou wilt shew me the path of life ; in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

CHAPTER IV.

HAPPINESS ARISING FROM THE PRIVILEGES AND PROSPECTS OF EVANGELICAL RELIGION.

'Tis Religion that can give
Sweetest pleasures while we live ;
'Tis Religion can supply
Solid comfort when we die.
After death its joys will be
Lasting as eternity ;
Be the living God my friend,
Then my bliss will never end.

It is a just remark of the pious Matthew Henry, that " Interest is the Governess of the world." That religion ought to be loved for its own sake is a fact which cannot be denied ; but that men are regulated in their conduct by the advantages, real or imaginary, which may accrue to them is equally undeniable. The sacred writers very frequently exhort to the fear of God, and to the discharge of every holy and relative duty, by representing the advantages resulting from

such a line of conduct. And there is no subject more interesting to the Christian himself, or on which he dwells with greater pleasure when recommending religion to others, than the privileges she confers, and the prospects she discloses. In our former chapters, we have examined the nature of evangelical religion, and investigated its doctrines and its duties, and have seen that they are calculated to impart the highest satisfaction to the mind ; we now propose to consider its privileges and its prospects. We are aware that it cannot be disputed that these tend to the happiness of man ; but we would do more than raise the subject above dispute ;—we would excite in the mind of the reader an ardent interest in the theme, and a holy resolution to embrace the religion of Jesus.

In examining the privileges of religion, we cannot but advert to the tranquillity and peace of mind it imparts to its possessor. It is a fine expression of the evangelical prophet to Jehovah, “Thou wilt keep him in

perfect peace whose mind is stayed upon thee, because he trusteth in thee." How beautifully has this statement been exemplified by believers in every age ! The world of nature presents to us a scene of warfare ; man rises against man, and brute against brute ; and in the moral world it is the same. The passions of the soul are found conflicting with each other ; foes internal and external are seeking the destruction of our peace ; evil tempers and disappointments of various kinds constantly destroy our serenity, and beset our paths ; our enjoyments fly from us, and we resemble the waves of the sea when in violent agitation. Hence it is said, " There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." But who needs to be told that the religion of the gospel calms the conflicting tempests of the soul, and enables the believer to triumph even in the midst of the greatest trials ? The man who has become sensible of his rebellion against God, must needs be unhappy to see the Governor of the universe about to exert his vengeance against him.

But behold in the gospel a way in which we can flee from his wrath. Jesus makes an atonement; faith leads us to repose on his sacrifice; and "being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have received the atonement, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Are we the subjects of poverty, affliction, and disappointment? Revelation exhibits Jehovah as our friend, and reposing on its statements we may sing, in the hour of sorrow, with the pious psalmist, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble! therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." It is the happiness of the Christian to be interested in the favour of Him who made the earth, and who upholds all things by the word of his power. Possessing this privilege, he

turns to the sacred volume and reads "exceeding great and precious promises," in which he is deeply interested; believing these, he smiles at the frowns of the world, he rises superior to sorrow, and exemplifies the language of Young—

"His hand the good man fastens on the skies.
And bids earth roll, nor feels her idle whirl."

Amidst the sorrows of life, and the cares attendant on humanity, religion teaches us to exercise entire resignation to the will of God, and to give up ourselves to his disposal; it convinces us that whatever he does is best, and leads us to be content with such things as we have, knowing that God is better acquainted with our necessities than we are ourselves, that he will withhold "no good thing" from us, and that "we have in heaven a more enduring substance." And is there not an indescribable pleasure in such sentiments and assurances as these? Can the principles, the pleasures, the wealth, or the honours of the world impart such blessed-

ness? O, how do all these shrink into mere insignificance when their possessor is brought into trying circumstances! At such a period, the character of the Christian bursts through the cloud of sorrow, and the principles which govern his conduct exhibit their splendour, and shew him, like the sun, beautiful in the glory of his Maker.

The connexions to which the religion of the gospel introduces us, must not be forgotten in our enumeration of its privileges. It is true that the men of the world would teach us to regard the followers of Jesus as enthusiasts and fanatics; it is true that they have always been treated as "the offscouring of all things," and as "unfit to live:" but He who estimates all things according to their real worth, holds them in very different estimation. He considers them as "the excellent of the earth," who give to the world its principal value,—as "the salt of the earth," who preserve it from destruction,—as the "jewels" he will one day be careful to collect,—and, in a word, as his "portion," his

"inheritance," and those whom he purchased at an infinite price. And when men are taught to view things through a proper medium, they have a great attachment to all in whom they can trace a resemblance to the Saviour. They account it a happiness to be numbered with them, and delight in the enjoyment of their intercourse.

The advantages of Christian fellowship are very considerable. We are thus encouraged to persevere in the way to heaven, notwithstanding the obstacles and the enemies we have to encounter ; in the hour of danger we are admonished,—in the season of perplexity instructed,—and in the day of sorrow our cases are borne on the hearts of our brethren to the throne of God. Union with the followers of Jesus dispels many discouragements, frees us from numerous temptations, enables us to prosecute our plans for the furtherance of his glory, and makes us blessings to the world at large. Those who have been most capable of forming a correct judgment on the subject, have most highly valued Christian

fellowship, and in its enjoyments have experienced something like the happiness of that world where the family of God shall all meet in the mansions of their Father to engage in the most delightful intercourse for ever. Let the world say what it may, Christian fellowship is a privilege of inestimable value. For does not the very thought of being one in spirit with the patriarchs and the prophets, the apostles and primitive Christians, the martyrs of every age, and the holy men who now exist, and who may yet live to the end of time, kindle our feelings of pleasure and of joy? Nor are we merely one with them in feelings, but we shall be united to them in residence, and in eternal felicity. Religion binds the hearts of its possessors to all that are lovely, and by the union increases our own excellence, as well as our pleasure. David and Jonathan had neither been so amiable nor so happy but for the influence of religious principle. Having this they were united and happy in life, and were not long separated even by death.

And if it be a privilege to hold intercourse with the people of God on earth, what must it be to be intimately associated with angels? "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation." Naturally disposed as we are to murmur against the good providence of God, we are apt to forget that if we are among those who love him, angels are employed to administer comfort to us in the hour of sorrow, protection and strength in the day of danger, and instruction in the season of perplexity. They bear witness to our worship on earth, feel a lively interest in our welfare, and will wait with holy pleasure around our dying beds, to conduct our disembodied spirits to the throne of God. These persons, the highest order of intelligent creatures, endowed with the noblest created attributes, blooming in immortal youth, and occupying a station immediately before the eternal throne, hasten with joy to bear the assurances of Divine favour to us, and anticipate, with pleasure, the period when we shall

join them and "the spirits of just men made perfect" in the heavenly state. And is it not a privilege to be guided and protected by angels? "And such honour have all the saints."

Distinguished as are these privileges, the true Christian possesses those which are still greater. He can contemplate the Being who created the universe, and say, "This God is my God, and will be my guide even unto death." Reconciled to him by the death of his Son, he can hold communion with him in his word; the ordinances of his house; and especially in private devotion. Here he retires from the world, and, lifting up his eyes to heaven, he pierces the veil that hides the world of glory from mortal view, his "fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Thus he experiences a pleasure which the grovelling sons of earth never knew, and exclaims, with the pious Asaph, "It is good for me to draw near to God."

"Prayer ardent opens heaven, lets down a stream
Of glory on the consecrated hour
Of man in audience with the Deity."

Turning to the sacred volume, he reads of that Saviour the testimony of whom was the great subject of prophecy, and in expectation of whom the patriarchs, and prophets, and kings of the Old Testament dispensation died ; of that Jesus whom Jehovah accounts his equal, who is the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person, and the supreme object of his love : and he may say, This Jesus is mine. “ He has loved me with an everlasting love, and with loving-kindness he has drawn me ” from all created good, and set my best affections on himself. I am united to him, and he has promised that because he lives I shall live also, and that he will conduct all his servants to his glorious residence, that they may behold his glory, and sit down with him on his throne. Oh ! what can fill a man with pleasure so refined and exalted as union to Christ, the source of all excellence ?

Nor do the privileges of the Christian end here. The Holy Spirit of God, whose peculiar office in the work of redemption it is to

glorify Christ by preparing his people for heaven, takes up his residence in the heart of every believer for this purpose. Hence our bodies are represented by an inspired apostle as the "temples of the Holy Spirit." By the influence he exerts on our hearts, and the dispositions he creates and cherishes, we are enabled to triumph over our spiritual foes, and to bring forth much "fruit to the praise of the glory of his grace."

Now if these are not privileges of the most exalted nature, it would be difficult to say what are such; that they are calculated to fill the heart of the man who enjoys them with the most refined pleasure is a fact not admitting of a denial; and that these privileges are enjoyed, and this pleasure experienced, can be testified by every believer on the Son of God.

It will be very readily granted that the happiness of the Christian, however great, is, in the present state, far from being perfect. The joys which religion now imparts are very far superior to those of the world, but her

richest blessings are in reserve, and belong to the state beyond the grave. The Christian while here is the subject of many infirmities,—he is beset with many enemies,—his enjoyments are mixed with sorrows,—and his soul, though renewed, and its faculties much expanded, by Divine grace, can “know but in part the things that God hath prepared for them who love him. But oh ! how animating the *prospects* of religion, and how are they calculated to fill us “with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

Does the Christian now lament his manifold infirmities ? Well he may : he has an “evil heart of unbelief prone to depart from the living God ;” he has yet “a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, so that when he would do good, evil is present with him ;” he is surrounded with difficulties and enemies that injure his comfort, and threaten his ruin. Religion, however, unfolds to him the prospect of being “made free from sin.” Here he is renewed “but in part ;” in the world to come he shall be per-

fectly "conformed to the image of Christ;" he shall be entirely "holy, and without blame before him in love." Every principle of sin that now exists and struggles in his heart shall be eradicated, and every holy disposition shall be made perfect. His enemies shall be all destroyed, and their temptations consequently unknown. His soul, now darkened and contracted by sin, and unable to bear large views, and to grasp at vast enjoyments, of the love of God, shall then be expanded and strengthened, that so he may be able to see Jesus as he is, that he may examine all his glories, not "through a glass darkly, but face to face," and may be enabled to drink largely at the river of the water of life.

"Millions of years my wond'ring soul
Shall o'er thy beauties rove;
And endless ages I'll adore
The glories of thy love."

The scenes by which the Christian is at present surrounded, and the depravity of which he is yet the subject, will not allow him to devote himself as he would do to the contemplation of the Divine character and

conduct. But then he shall be removed from a world where there are so many interruptions to his peace, and so much to draw his attention from the only object worthy of his regard, to dwell for ever in the presence of God, and to enjoy the blessings of infinite benevolence, untainted by that moral pollution which now mixes up itself with all our enjoyments.

Sin being removed far from us, its inseparable companion, sorrow, shall be equally unknown. Here we must needs taste the bitter effects of transgression against the source of purity and bliss, but there holiness and happiness shall constantly attend on each other, and each add to the glory of its companion.

Our friends, who, in this world, like ourselves, display the imperfections attendant on even the best men, shall be there freed from every infirmity, and the most unbounded confidence be reposed in each; while the certainty of our pleasures and our intercourse being secure from interruption or close, shall

give a new zest to our enjoyments, and make them absolutely perfect.

The employments in which the Christian shall be engaged are such as perfectly accord with his nature and disposition. To review the dealings of God, to study his character, to converse on his love, and to render him the praise of our hearts, are employments in which we now engage with pleasure; what then, must they be when we recount all his dealings towards us, and ascertain the springs which regulated every dispensation; when we shall see him as he is, and know even as we are known; when we "shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God?" when an eternity shall be before us, ever developing new glories in the character of the Saviour, and ever imparting new favours from his love.

"Then shall our passions all be love,
And all our powers be praise."

And what adds to the glory of this prospect is, that this "hope of eternal life" is not founded on an uncertain basis, but on the

word of Him who cannot lie. It was prepared by Jehovah in his purposes before the foundation of the world ; it is promised again and again to each of those who believe in his name, who are made heirs to this inheritance ; he has already given us an earnest of this joy by the desires he has implanted, and the graces he has bestowed ; and, relying on his word, we already know much of the happiness we shall more fully enjoy when we have passed the valley of the shadow of death. There, raised to dignity unknown even to angels, and brought to the throne of God, we shall drink of the river of the water of life, and pluck the fruit of the tree of immortality. No serpent there shall tempt us from the fountain of our bliss, but “ we shall be ever with the Lord,” enjoying the riches of his love as long as he himself shall exist.

Let it be remembered that what we have now exhibited is a very imperfect sketch of the glories of the world to come. “ Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things

which God hath prepared for them who love him." Enough, however, has been said to shew the infinite superiority of the believer in Christ to the man of the world ; and now let the reader decide, does the religion of the gospel tend to melancholy ? Will infidelity, or what has been termed the religion of nature, thus support the mind under afflictions, and introduce to connexions so honourable ? No : its pleasures are worthless, and its prospects are dim. Religion gives present comfort, and leads to immortal happiness ; but infidelity overspreads the mind with gloom now, and conducts to eternal despair hereafter.

CHAPTER V.

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED—IMPROVEMENT OF THE SUBJECT.

*Its unextinguish'd ray shall burn
Through death, unchang'd its frame ;
Its lamp shall triumph o'er the grave,
With uncorrupted flame.*

ANON.

HAVING endeavoured to prove that the religion of the gospel is capable of affording the highest degree of genuine enjoyment, we shall now draw to a close, by answering one or two objections which may be urged against the doctrine, and by suggesting the improvement we should make of the whole subject.

It may be objected, then, that the inspired writers sometimes speak of religion in terms which seem to imply feelings opposite to those of a pleasurable kind. Solomon describes the good man as one "who feels the plague of

his own heart ;" the believer is elsewhere represented as a labourer—a warrior, and, in a word, like his great Master, "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs:"—the sacred volume contains the bitterest expressions of sorrow uttered by some of the best of men, and the Saviour is spoken of as not pleasing himself, and as teaching us, that if we would share the happiness of his people, we must take up our cross and follow him. We do not pretend to deny that the Christian is the subject of painful feelings, and that he is called to the discharge of the most painful duties. But let these sorrows be examined as to their nature, let them be traced to their origin, and followed out in their effects, and it will at once be seen that they spring, not from religion, but from sin. Not a cloud had ever enveloped the human mind had not sin entered our world. It is true that the man who is altogether destitute of religion is altogether unacquainted with this class of sorrows, but the reason of this is, that he is "blind, knowing nothing ;" he is unfeeling, and not

aware of his danger. Could he be brought to see his true circumstances, the pleasure in which he now seems to indulge would flee from him, and he would be the subject of inexpressible sorrow. The Christian who has embraced the truths of the gospel, and who is living by faith on the Saviour, feels himself yet a sinner; he is the subject of "an evil heart of unbelief, prone to depart from the living God," and this fact gives him pain. To oppose sin, and to rise above it, is the object after which he labours, and to resist the evil inclinations of his heart is the cross he has daily to bear. Thus we see that the sorrows of the Christian spring from sin; and it is the province of religion to support him in this conflict, to strengthen him for these labours; and this it does in a degree of which the worldly man can form no idea. It exhibits the promises of God on which the mind can repose, it conducts to the throne of grace, where the soul derives strength immediately from heaven, and it exhibits the crown of victory he shall finally wear, and the world of

repose in which he shall indulge in eternal triumphs, in the presence of his Saviour.

It may be objected farther to the doctrine we have attempted to prove, that many professing Christians are disposed to melancholy, and appear the subjects of the deepest sorrow. This statement is correct; but from what does this melancholy arise? Perhaps it is a constitutional disease—perhaps it is the result of some erroneous views of the truth which they have, somehow or other, imbibed—or possibly it arises from a fear that they do not possess religion: it is certain it does not spring from religion itself. Let these persons be appealed to, and they will be found to have a conviction that religion alone can make them happy; they will desire its possession above every other object, and it will not be possible by any means to draw their attention from it. With all the gloom that oppresses their minds, they are happier in the pursuit of spiritual good than they could be in the world, and did they possess more correct views of religion itself, their enjoyment would be far

superior to what it is. This is proved by the happiness which many of these persons experience when they are more enlightened as to the true nature of Christianity, and have their hopes excited of an interest in the Divine favour.

But, once again, an objector may ask, If religion makes a man happy, how is it that so many of its professors forsake it? It is admitted that these persons have never tasted its happiness, because they have never possessed religion. It is religion itself, or a right disposition of heart towards God, which makes a man happy, and not the mere profession of it. As a man, in order to obtain respect from his neighbours, may profess an acquaintance with the sciences, while he is altogether destitute of a correct or enlarged knowledge of them, even so may he profess religion without loving it, or enjoying any of its advantages. There are many whose consciences are alarmed, and who have fled to the forms of religion, to make, as they say, their peace with God ; these persons have no love to it,

and when their consciences by any means are quieted, they turn from the path of piety, and perhaps bring an evil report upon it. Others embrace a profession of the truth merely to answer some temporal purpose, which having accomplished, they desert it. Now, surely it is a most unfair and unreasonable thing to throw on religion the scandal of making a man unhappy, because it has not given enjoyment to those who never cordially embraced it, and such must be all those persons who can give up the truth, and walk no more in the way of godliness.

But if, after all we have said, the objector is not satisfied, let him appeal to the thousands who have embraced religion, and have lived and died in her service. Let the records of the church be examined, and the testimony of the wisest and best of men be received. Or let him appeal to Christians around him; let him inquire from them where happiness can be found, and they will all give the same answer. Let him visit the death-bed of the believer in Jesus, and tell us what but religion

can impart so much serenity, and enable its possessor to enter the valley of the shadow of death with exalted pleasure, saying to his relatives, as he retires from the world, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves." Philosophy never did this : it has, in some of its happiest efforts, preserved the mind from violent agitations, but it never could shew the way in which its adherents could obtain a victory over death, and descend to the grave, singing, "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ !" Triumphs like these are peculiar to the religion of the gospel, which ennobles and dignifies its possessor, throws the purest pleasures in the path he has now to walk, enables him to contemplate his departure from the world with joy, and then conducts him to a state where he shall for ever engage in the praises of his Saviour, who has proved to him the fountain of happiness.

Who, after all these pretended objections, which men would more frequently make did they not feel them to be futile, can doubt the

tendency of religion to create and to cherish the happiness of man ? It is impossible for a mind that has carefully investigated this subject, to doubt that God has made the most ample and the most suitable provision for the happiness of human beings.

Nor will it admit of a denial, that the Supreme Being has, throughout his word, made it the duty of man to enjoy this happiness. All his requirements conduct to happiness ; all his invitations lead us to its source ; and all his threatenings warn us against forsaking it. The belief of his word, and the reception of his blessings, are required by his authority, and fill us with holy joy ; while the rejection of the happiness he proffers us, conducts to eternal perdition and despair.

Here, then, we have proved, that if man be not happy, it cannot be the fault of his Maker, but his own. It is a sin equally against the divine government and his own soul ; and the recollection of this awful fact will add to his bitter anguish in the bottomless pit.

It only remains now that we suggest one or two lessons of improvement arising from the whole subject. Religion is of a practical nature; its doctrines are all designed to influence our spirit and our conduct, and the effect of Divine truth should be to promote our growing conformity to the moral image of God.

The first remark that presents itself is on the importance of possessing correct views of religion. As it is truth only which can make us happy, let us diligently study the inspired volume, to learn what are the doctrines it teaches, and the feelings it inspires. The gospel of Jesus Christ can alone lead us to the object of our pursuit. All other systems of religion involve us in a state of uncertainty, and rest our hopes for eternity on a foundation that has no stability.

Will the reader pardon me if I propose the important question, Does he possess the religion of the gospel? This is an inquiry on which his happiness, present and future, de-

penda. Religion may tend to happiness, but if I do not possess it, of what real value is the fact to me? Let me entreat my reader, as he values his own soul, and as he seeks for the happiness which that soul is capable of enjoying, to ascertain, by a careful examination, blended with ardent prayer, whether the views he entertains of truth correspond with the book of God, whether they produce their proper influence on his heart and life, and whether they lead him to God, and fill him with joys which the world cannot give him, and of which he cannot be deprived. An error here is of infinite importance;—on account of the deceitfulness of our hearts, we are liable to mistakes;—how important, then, impartially to examine ourselves, and that with prayer to the “Father of lights” that we may be preserved from delusion on a subject of such vital importance.

If it is our happiness to possess this religion, let us, by the exhibition of holy cheerfulness, and everything that is amiable, recommend

it to others. On this subject, the excellent Mr. Jay has the following animated remarks, which I shall beg leave to transcribe:—

“All men seek happiness; and if they perceive that you find what they seek after in vain—though they turn from pleasure to wealth, from wealth to fame, from fame to friendship, from friendship to science—this is likely to awaken their attention, to conciliate their regard, and to induce them to take hold of him that is a Jew, saying, we will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.

“It is commonly supposed that religion is a mopish and melancholy thing—that it prescribes a constant fast—that it requires us to walk in a way which, though it may end in everlasting life, is full of thorns and briars, and toads and scorpions. Such a prospect must naturally and unavoidably terrify and disgust. And, hence, this prejudice will be found to be as injurious as it is common; for present feelings are the most powerful. The constitution of man is such, that he must have present gratification. He is thirsty and

must drink ; and if there be no fountain near, he will kneel down to the puddle. Now, would you confirm a prejudice so general and so fatal as this, by long demure faces ; by sighs and groans, as if you were always at a funeral ; by your insensibilities to the beauties of nature, and indifference to the bounties of Providence ; by indulging those peevish fretful tempers, which make you ‘a continual dropping in a rainy day ;’ by your sinking in the day of adversity, and drawing upon yourself the reflection of many in Eliphaz, ‘Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands ; thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees ; but now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest ; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled. Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy way ?’ Would you lead people to think that your Master is a tyrant, and his service bondage ? Would you appear to be less happy in serving the Lord than in serving sin ? Would you shew that in exchanging the world for the church, you

fell from liberty into a dungeon, and left a fruitful field for a barren land, or a wilderness of drought? It must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! Be alive, my brethren, to your duty, if not to your privileges; and render your religion as attractive as it is important.

“ I go back to the primitive Christians.—*They* learned, in whatsoever state they were, therewith to be content. In every thing they gave thanks. If sorrowful, they were always rejoicing. They did not think it necessary to wade through a sea of soul trouble to authorize them to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. They did not suffer a sense of their unworthiness and imperfections, though it kept them humble, to make them miserable, or to deprive them of hope. They did not torment themselves about futurity, but cast all their care on one who cared for them. They did not view death as the king of terrors, but as their deliverer and their friend. The day of judgment did not keep them aghast; they waited for it, and

loved His appearing. Here I see everything as it ought to be. After this I turn to modern professors, and here I behold a difference which can only be accounted for on one of these two principles: either that Christianity has changed since, or we do not understand it and receive it aright. The former solution is inadmissible. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. There is the same efficacy in his blood. There is the same power in his arm. There is the same love in his heart. The promises are the same. The throne of grace is the same. Heaven is the same.—No, Christians; the difference is to be sought, not in the system, but in yourselves. Seriously, therefore, examine your experience. Pray that you may know what is the hope of your calling, and what is the glory of the riches of his inheritance in the saints. Be concerned to face a reproaching world, and with boldness to tell them—

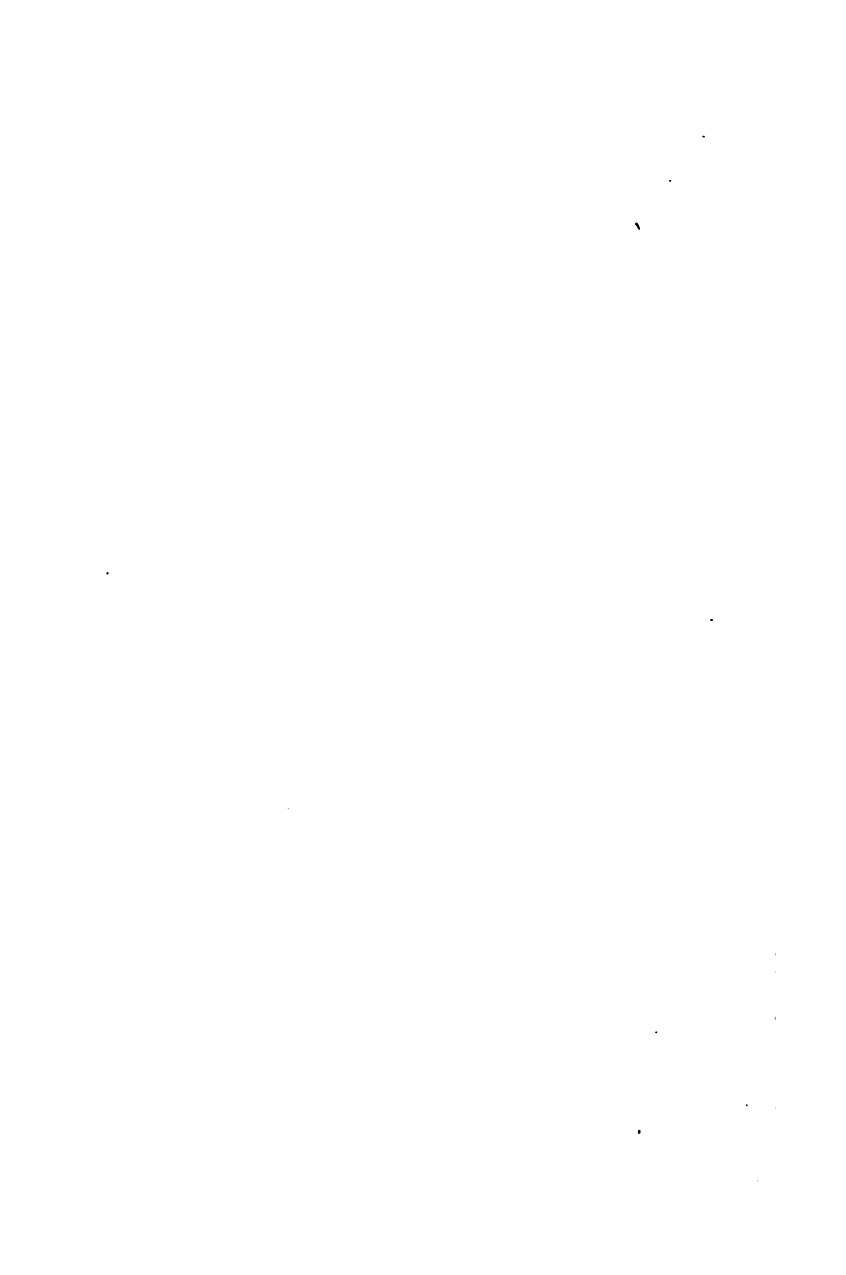
The men of grace have found
Glory begun below,
And heavenly fruits on earthly ground
From faith and hope will grow.

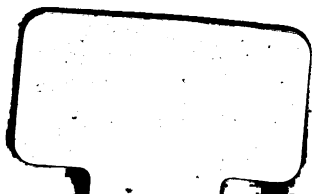
Shew that no danger can terrify you ; that no loss can impoverish you. Shew that if the reed fails, the rock remains ; if the cistern be dried up, the fountain of living water flows on. Say, with the church, ‘ Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine ; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, and the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice.’ ”

And if we feel as we ought to do on the subject which has now occupied our attention, we shall be concerned to extend the knowledge of the gospel throughout the world. How miserable the state of those nations who do not possess it ! Oh, what ignorance, superstition, idolatry, and cruelty prevail among them ! And can we possess the knowledge of an infallible remedy which can heal every moral disease, and restore to life and happiness, and conceal it from those who are perish-

ing? Christians! in watering the barren parts of the earth with the living water you have received from the throne of God, you ensure a larger supply of it for your own happiness. Extend the riches of Divine knowledge, and your joy shall be increased, by seeing others rescued from misery, and brought to the enjoyment of God. Those who know not the religion of Jesus must be unhappy indeed! They may have all this world can give them, but if the curse of Jehovah rests on their heads, how can they be happy? And that professing Christian who can see such persons all around him, and stretches not the hand of pity for their rescue, "how dwelleth the love of God in him"? or how can he love his neighbour as himself?







the 1990s, the number of people with a mental health problem has increased by 50% (Mental Health Foundation 1999). The prevalence of mental health problems has increased in the general population, and the incidence of mental health problems has increased in the prison population.

There is a growing awareness of the need to address the mental health needs of prisoners. The Department of Health (2000) has published a strategy for mental health services, which includes a commitment to improve the mental health of prisoners. The Department of Health (2000) has also published a strategy for mental health services, which includes a commitment to improve the mental health of prisoners.

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